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Jimmy Johnson

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE

April 6, 1994

It was a week to remember in Dallas. Even by Texas standards this story was as big and slimy as they come. Jimmy Johnson was gone, Barry Switzer had arrived, and Jerry Jones had just swapped the two biggest egos in football coaching for one another. Proving in the process that he has the biggest ego of all. Not to mention the most power.

When Jimmy Johnson was pushed out the door with several millions in pocket change, the obvious question was, who would take his place? It was difficult to believe that Jerry Jones would or could go out and find someone with as big an ego as Johnson's, and someone who at the same time was a bigger jerk than Jimmy. Ah, but it was deceptively easy, as waiting in the wings, actually waiting in the next room, was Barry Switzer, who only a short five years ago had one of the lowest acts in all of college football. It was easy to overlook Barry because he had not been in coaching since, and besides he had no NFL experience.

What he did have was a past that had crossed with both Jimmy and Jerry, and a record that could only irritate Jimmy Johnson as he left Dallas. To be replaced by Barry Switzer was perhaps the most painful part of this entire scenario for Johnson.

Jones and Switzer go back together as far as Jones and Johnson, and from Jones' point of view, to bring in Switzer is nearly perfect, as he brings in someone who had lost all his football status, and now owes everything to the leige lord of Dallas.

To see Switzer fawning over Jones, to see the smarmy and slimly pawing of Jones by Switzer, was to see a low form of human life reduced to court sycophant. To see Switzer in this position was both marvelous and pathetic. No human being should be put through such an act, but then maybe Barry Switzer should be.

For those of us across the land who have over the years developed a healthy hatred for the Cowboys and Dallas, it was a wonderful day. To contemplate the possible disintegration of the Cowboys is a joy, and certainly players like Troy Aikman, who left Switzer's Oklahoma as a freshman, will have some difficulty adjusting. As for Michael Irvin's tantrum, it could not have been more welcome. One can only wonder if professional football players making major dollars will take this Sooner street-hustler seriously, or whether he will be laughed off the stage as Lou Holtz was in New York.

As for Jimmy Johnson it is likely to be pure velvet. He leaves Dallas with millions in his pocket, a reputation as the best coach in America, college or pro, and the likelihood that he will be named head coach, general manager, part owner and minor diety somewhere in the next few months or the next year. One would think that someone like Wayne Huisenga, who just bought the Dolphins, will look to replace Shula with Johnson at least at the end of next season. Or perhaps the Charlotte franchise will give Johnson a piece of the club, total control of operations, and maybe a piece of the city. If all else fails Jimmy can always pick up a few pennies endorsing hair spray and blow driers, before he assumes a messianic role in some NFL bastion.

As for Jones and Switzer the only real question is who the Dallas fans will blame most when Dynasty gets cancelled? It is difficult to imagine that after all those years of hating Barry Switzer of Oklahoma, the fans of Dallas will be giving the Head Sooner a warm Texas welcome. This may be most fun in Dallas since J.R. got his.

Watching the press conference in which Johnson and Jones parted company was remarkable. These two giant egos sitting side by side trying to look civil, saying nice things about one another, was almost too much to take. But that paled with what came twenty-four hours later. It may have been the slimiest scene in the history of American sport. Here were two guys who really deserved one another. It was magical, turning your stomach and warming your heart at one and the same time. The only thing better would have been the naming of Lou Holtz as Switzer's assistant, and Bobby Knight as director of public relations.

Those who wonder if crime pays, should ask Barry Switzer.

And speaking of all these Arkansas guys, how would you like a job in which you could host an Easter egg roll on your lawn in the morning in Washington, go to an opening day baseball game in the afternoon in Cleveland, and finish by watching your favorite college basketball team win the national championship in Charlotte that same night. And you can do all of this without paying a scalper a dime, without worry about an airline losing your luggage, and with a guarantee of great seats at all the events.

Is this the year of the Hog, or what?!

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't have to be good sport to be a bad loser.

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